"DO I HAVE THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL" ?

11/23/60

ALL OVER OUR LAND, THIS EVENING AND TOMORROW AMERICANS WILL CELEBRATE "THANKSGIVING." A LARGE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO GO TO CHURCH ON THIS OCCASION WILL BE REMINDED OF HOW MUCH MORE FORTUNATE THEY ARE THAN THE STARVING MILLIONS IN INDO CHINA. PEOPLE EVERYWHERE WILL FIND IN THANKSGIVING DAY AN OCCASION FOR COMPARING THEIR MATERIAL WEEL-BEING WITH THE POORER YEARS IN PAST, OR WITH LESS FORTUNATE FOLK THE WORLD OVER. FOR ME TO DEVOTE OUR EFFORTS THIS EVENING TO RECALLING HOW WELL-OFF WE ARE WOULD BE SILLY--FOR IT IS A FACT WE CANNOT ESCAPE. WHAT AMERICAN ISN'T AWARE THAT HE HAS THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE WORLD. WHO DOESN'T KNOW THAT WE SPEND MORE DOLLARS, DRIVE MORE AUTOMOBILES, CONSUME MORE STEAKS THAN ANYONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED. YOU KNOW THAT OUR FREEDOM, DEATH RATE, NUMBER OF HOSPITALS ARE JUST A FEW OF THE VAST NUMBER OF THINGS AN AMERICAN ENJOYS AND FOR WHICH WE MUST GIVE THANKS. I SERIOUSLY DOUBT WHETHER THERE IS ONE HOME REPRESENTED HERE TONIGHT THAT DOESN'T HAVE A TURKEY IN SOME STAGE OF PREPARATION, AND WHO ISN'T LOOKING FORWARD TO TOMORROW AS A TIME FOR FAMILY REUNIONS, RELAXATION, AND ONE OF THE BEST MEALS IN THE YEAR. I AM CERTAINLY ONE OF THAT NUMBER.

BUT BEFORE THE DAY COMES AND GOES I WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER TWO IDEAS. THE FIRST IS CONCERNED WITH TWO DATES IN HISTORY REALTED ~~MX~~ TO THANKSGIVING AND THE SECOND AND MOST IMPORTANT IS WHAT ACTUALLY IS INVOLVED IN BEING TRULY THANKFUL AND DO WE ACHIEVE IT?

YOU ALL KNOW THE STORY OF THE FIRST THANKSGIVING, HOW THE SETTLERS IN MASSACHUSETTS FOUGHT THE ELEMENTS, BRAVED THE NEW ENGLAND WINTERS AND HOSTILE INDIANS, HOW THEY TOILED ROCKY AND WEATHER RIDDEN SOIL AND HOW THEY CELEBRATED IN A FEAST OF PRAISE AND THANKFULNESS. THE POPULAR PICTURES OF THAT FIRST FEAST THAT ADORN MAGAZINES AND HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY BOOKS INDICATE QUITE A JUBILANT OCCASION—CHILDREN ARE HAPPILY PLAYING, WOMEN ARE BUSTLING ABOUT WITH RADIANT PURITY GLEAMING OUT FROM UNDER THEIR BONNETS. THE TABLES ARE LADEN WITH FOOD--IN THE BACKGROUND ARE LOG CABINS THAT LOOK MUCH LIKE A WISCONSIN TOURIST RESORT AND THERE ARE ALWAYS A FEW QUITE NOBLE SAVAGES CHATTING WITH THE MEN FOLK. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ WITH ALL DUE REPECT TO THE WELL MEANING ARTISTS, CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT ACTUALLY HOW LITTLE THAT GROUP HAD TO BE THANKFUL FOR. CERTAINLY THEY ENJOYED THEIR NEW FREEDOM AND THE THRILL OF CONQUERING A NEW LAND BUT THERE WAS HARDLY A PERSON THERE WHOHAD NOT SEEN ONE OR MORE OF HIS FAMILY PERISH FROM STARVATION, FROM EXPOSURE,

- How meager that Feast, compared to our standards

or more horribly at the hands of the indians. THERE WAS NOT ONE PRESENT WHO FORGOT A HOME AND LOVED ONES THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY THAT THEY WOULD NEVER SEE AGAIN. AND YET THEY WERE THANKFUL. A FAR CRY OUR THANKSIGIVING OBSERVANCE IS FROM THEIRS!— A FAR CRY OUR TYPE OF THANKFULNESS!

CONSIDER ANOTHER DATE IN HISTORY, THIS ONE NEARLY 200 YEARS LATER. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, IN A MOVING MESSAGE DECLARED THANKSGIVING A NATIONAL HOLIDAY. AND WHAT WAS FOREMOST IN HIS MIND? A SON WHO HAD DIED, A WIFE WHO WAS, TO SAY THE LEAST, DIFFERENT AND MOST OF ALL A NATION THAT BECAUSE OF HIS PROCLAIMATION, WAS DIVIDED BY CIVIL WAR. WHATEVER IT WAS THAT THE PILGRIMS HAD IN MIND IT SEEMS LINCOLN HAD A LITTLE TOO. IN BOTH INSTANCES THE SITUATION WAS FAR FROM BEING BRIGHT AND ENCOURAGING AND IN BOTH, MEN WERE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL. ALONG THE SAME LINE IT SEEMS LIKE IN OUR OBSERVANCES WE HAVE FALLEN QUITE SHORT OF THAT SOMETHING.

THAT SOMETHING IS THE SECOND IDEA I HOPE TO CONCERN YOU WITH, THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

MY TEXT IS FROM THE 17TH CHAPTER OF LUKE. (READ LUKE 17: 10-19

"ON OUR WAY TO JERUSALEM HE WAS PASSING ALONG BETWEEN SAMARIA AND GALILEE. AND AS HE ENTERED A VILLAGE, HE WAS MET BY TEN LEPERS, WHO STOOD AT A DISTANCE AND LIFTED UP THEIR VOICES AND SAID, "JESUS, MASTER, HAVE MERCY ON US." WHEN HE SAW THEM HE SAID TO THEM, "GO AND SHOW YOURSELVES TO THE PRIESTS." AND AS

THEY WENT THEY WERE CLEANSED. THEN ONE OF THE, WHEN HE SAW THAT HE WAS HEALED, TURNED BACK, PRAISING GOD WITH A LOUD VOICE: AND HE FELL ON HIS FACE AT JESUS' FEET, GIVING HIM THANKS. NOW HE WAS A SAMARITAN. THEN SAID JESUS, " WERE NOT TEN CLEANSED? WHERE ARE THE NINE? WAS NO ONE FOUND TO RETURN AND GIVE PRAISE TO GOD EXCEPT THIS FOREIGNER?" AND HE SAID TO HIM, " RISE AND GO YOU WAY, YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL."'

TEN LEPERS WERE MADE WELL, ONE RETURNED TO THANK THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MIRACLE: THE OTHER NINE APPARENTLY IMMEDIATELY FORGOT HOW THIS GLORIOUS EVENT OCCURRED.

THIS ACCOUNT CONTAINS NOT ONLY A DESCRIPTION OF JESUS COMPASSION AND HIS DIVINE POWER, BUT ALSO REVEALS A GOOD BIT OF TRUTH ABOUT THE WAY MEN ARE PRONE TO ACT.

FIRSTLY, THE MAN WHO RETURNED TO THANK JESUS AND PRAISE GOD WAS A SAMARITAN, A FOREIGNER--~~HERE~~ As was LUKE HIMSELF. ALTHOUGH THIS IS JUST A SIDE-LIGHT OF THE STORY IT POINTS TO A REALITY IN ALL OF LIFE. (X) Today A FOREIGNER OR IMMIGRANT IS ~~MXXX~~ MUCH MORE THANKFUL IN OUR LAND THAN WE SEEM TO BE.

Luke's reason for pointing this out is clear — the Jews failed to realize the significance — only a foreigner returned

THIS SECONDARY THEME LEADS INTO ONE OF THE MAJOR AND DEEPER IMPLICA* TIONS OF THE STORY. ONE MAN RETURNED, NINE DID NOT—WHY? WHY DIDN'T THE NINE GIVE RECOGNITION TO THE ~~OB~~VIOUS? WHY DIDN'T THEY RETURN TO THANK JESUS?

GRATITUDE, OR Rather THE ABILITY TO BE GRATEFUL IS IN EVERY MAN. PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING ARE THE NATURAL REACTION TO THE CREATIVE LOVE OF GOD. A BABY SOON REALIZES WHICH PERSON WILL PROVIDE FOR ITS NEEDS AND COMPLIES WITH FRIENDLINESS OR A SMILE. EVEN A DOG OR CAT KNOW WHO THEIR FRIENDS ARE AND SHOW GRATITUDE IN THEIR PARTICULAR WAYS. BUT THE ABILITY TO BE THANKFUL DOES NOT COME READY MADE, BUT RATHER IS IN SEED FORM IN ALL OF US. LIKE A SEED IN THE GROUND IT NEEDS TO BE NURTURED, IT NEEDS BOTH DARKNESS AND LIGHT, RAIN AND SHINE TO DEVELOP FULLY.

AS A SEED RESPONDS ONLY IF NURTURED WITH CERTAIN AMOUNTS OF SUNSHINE AND RAIN, SO THE ABILITY TO BE THANKFUL IS Responsive but also DEPENDENT UPON THE SAME VARIATIONS. HOW LITTLE THE SUN MEANS TO THE RESIDENT OF A DESERT--BUT HOW WARM IT FEELS AND HOW WONDERFUL IT MUST SEEM TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE JUST BEEN UNDER A THREE MONTH SEIGE OF MONSOON WEATHER.

HOW WONDERFUL LIFE SEEMS AFTER A CLOSE CALL WITH DEATH. EVEN AT THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE WE AUTOMATICALLY FEEL THANKFUL THAT HE HAS LIVED. HOW DELICIOUS A MEAL TASTES AFTER WE HAVE EXPERIENCED HUNGER. HOW EXCITED AND ECSTATIC ONE MUST BE WHO FOR YEARS HAS UNDERGONE THE HIDEOUS CREEPING GRAYNESS OF LEPROSY AND SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF CURED. THE STORY OF

THE LEPER WHO RETURNED POINTS TO ~~MAN'S NECESSITY TO EXPERIENCE~~ the necessity for most people of experiencing UNCOMFORT BEFORE ~~HE~~ They CAN BE THANKFUL FOR COMFORT. IN THIS ASPECT THE STORY IS VERY APPROPRIATE FOR US--WE HAVE NEVER ENCOUNTERED REAL TRAGEDY COMPARED TO OTHERS . IT IS A REAL DANGER THAT WE DON'T HAVE MISFORTUNE TO COMPARE WITH OUR GOOD FORTUNE.

THE POTENTIAL FOR PRAISE AND THANKFULNESS IS INHERENT IN ALL OF US, WE ARE NATURALLY RESPONSIVE TO SOMEONE WHO DOES SOMETHING NICE FOR US. BUT TO BE THANKFUL FOR ALL OF LIFE, TO HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF THANKFULNESS REQUIRES AN EFFORT, IT REQUIRES NUTURE AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

I HAVE TWO EXAMPLES WITH WHICH I HOPE TO POINT OUT THIS ATTITUDE OF THANKFULNESS OR THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

SAMUEL LEIBOWITZ WAS A FAMOUS AND WEALTHY NEW YORK CRIMINAL LAWYER. A LARGE PART OF HIS CAREER WAS DEVOTED TO INVESTIGATING THE CASES OF MEN WHO HAD BEEN CONVICTED AND ~~SENTENCED TO DIE~~ Recieved the Death Sentence. IN HIS LIFE TIME HE SAVED A TOTAL OF SEVENTY EIGHT MEN WHO ~~HAD BEEN SENTENCED~~ were on their way TO THE ELECTRIC CHAIR. WERE IT NOT FOR HIM, THESE MEN WOULD HAVE DIED. AND HOW MANY DO YOU THINK THANKED HIM, ? NOT A ONE! NOT ONE MAN OUT OF 78 EVER WROTE A LETTER OR IN ANY WAY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR MR. LEIBOWITZ'S EFFORTS. SURELY THEY WERE GLAD THEY HADN'T DIED.

BUT WHAT WAS MISSING IN THEIR LIVES UNANIMOUSLY, WAS THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

A FEW YEARS AGO A YOUNG JAPANESE STUDENT AT A BIG EASTERN UNIVERSITY LEFT HIS DORMITORY ONE EVENING TO MAIL A LETTER TO HIS PARENTS. ON THE WAY HE ENCOUNTERED A STREET GANG WHO BEAT HIM BRUTALLY: HE DIED IN THE HOSPITAL THE NEXT DAY. THE EVENT SHOCKED AND EMBARRASSED THE CITY AND THE UNIVERSITY. THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN JAPAN SENT NOTES, AND PERSONAL REPRIEVEMENTS TO HIS PARENTS. THE YOUNG MEN THAT COMMITTED THIS SENSELESS MURDER WERE QUICKLY ROUNDED UP AND PUT IN JAIL PENDING TRIAL. NO WORD WAS HEARD FROM THE YOUNG STUDENT'S PARENTS. AND NOW SIX YEARS LATER THE CRUSHED AND SADDENED PARENTS HAVE WRITTEN A LETTER, TO THE MAYOR OF THE CITY, TO THE UNIVERSITY AND TO THE ENTIRE NATION. THE LETTER DOES NOT ATTACK A CULTURE HTAT HAS BRED JUVENILE DELINQUENTS, IT ISN'T FILLED WITH THE RESENT AND HATRED WE WOULD EXPECT. INSTEAD THE WHOLE TONE OF THE LETTER IS ONE OF THANKFULNESS, THAT THERE IS A LAND THAT WELCOMES FOREIGN STUDENTS, THAT PROVIDES THEM WITH FINANCIAL AID. THAT THERE IS A PLACE WITH HIGH CALIBER UNIVERSITIES OPEN TO ALL. ON TOP OF THIS THE PARENTS SENT THEIR SYMPATHIES TO THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS OF THE BOYS WHO MURDERED THEIR SON, AND WITH A FEELING OF KINSHIP ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY ALL HAD LOST SOMETHING.

THESE TRULY GRACIOUS PEOPLE CLOSED THEIR LETTER BY AGAIN THANKING ALL WHO HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEIR SON: PLEASDED MERCY FOR THEIR SON'S MURDERERS AND ENCLOSED A LARGE CHECK TO BE THE FIRST DONATION IN A FUND TO SOMEHOW CORRECT THE EVIL THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.

THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO WHOLE ATTITUDE IS THAT OF THANKFULNESS, THEY SURELY HAD THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

I COULD GO ON INDEFINITELY CITING EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE WHO WERE EITHER GRACIOUSLY THANKFUL OR UNGRATEFULLY. PILGRIMS, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE 78 CRIMINALS, JAPANESE PARENTS AND THE LEPERS ARE IMPORTANT BUT OF GREATEST IMMEDIACY IS OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE CELEBRATION OF THANKSIGIVING DAY. THE QUESTION WE JUST ASK OURSELVES IS DO I HAVE THE GRACE TO BE TRULY THANKFUL?

RARELY A DAY GOES BY THT WE DON'T FORGET TO THANK SOMEONE FOR A HELPING HAND, OR A SPECIAL FAVOR. THE GUILT FEELINGS THAT RESULT WHEN WE SUDDENLY REMEMBER, I FORGOT to THANK SO AND SO ARE A COMMON EXPERIENCE TO ALL OF US. AND NO MATTER HOW PROFUSELY WE THANK THAT PERSON LATER WE CAN NEVER MAKE UP FOR THAT MOMENT OF NEGLIGENCE. WE ARE ALL PLAGUED WITH A LACK OF GRATEFULNESS.

BEING TRULY GRATEFUL INVOLVES MORE THAN THE SATISFACTION OF RECEIVING A GIFT, IT IS MORE PROFOUND THAN A TYPICAL "THANKS A LOT". IT IS IN THE TRUE SENSE A RETURNING OF SOMETHING, AN OUT POURING OF PART OF OURSELVES. TRUE THANKFULNESS INVOLVES A DIMINISHING OF OUR PARTICULAR

PLEASURE AND SATISFACTION AND A REALIZATION OF WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE ACT OF GIVING. TRUE THANKFULNESS MUST BE A GIVING BACK OF PART OF OURSELVES, AN INNER PROJECTION BETWEEN ONE PERSON AND ANOTHER. THIS IS THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

OUR PRIME EXAMPLE IS SEEN IN JESUS CHRIST, WHO A FEW HOURS BEFORE HIS ARREST RETIRED TO A GARDEN AND POURED OUT HIS HEART FOR HIS DISCIPLES AND FOR ALL OF MANKIND; WHO THE EVENING BEFORE HIS ARREST BROKE BREAD AND GAVE THANKS. IN HIM WE SEE THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL.

WHEN WE SIT DOWN AT A LAVISH TABLE TOMORROW LET'S NOT CONFINE OUR GRATITUDE TO A CASUAL "THANKS ALOT" FOR THIS FOOD: OR LET'S NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE BECAUSE THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD LESS FORTUNATE. RATHER LET US THINK ABOUT A GOD IN WHOM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING, ~~LET US GIVE BACK PART OF OURSELVES IN A TOTAL ATTITUDE OF THANKSGIVING~~.

REMEMBERING THE PILGRIMS, ABE LINCOLN AND THE JAPANESE PARENTS, LET US CELEBRATE, BUT WITH THE TOTAL ATMOSPHERE FILLED WITH GRATITUDE. LET US PRAY TO GOD TO GIVE US THE GRACE TO BE THANKFUL!

AMEN.

let us give back part of ourselves in a total attitude of thanksgiving